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PAPERS READ

BEFORE THE

ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

DURING THE SESSION 1862-63.

[FORMING VOL. XXXIII. OF THE SOCIETY'S JOURNAL.
PUBLISHED AUGUST 20TH, 1864.]

I.—*Exploration of the Lower Course of the River Burdekin, in Queensland, and its identification with the River Wickham.* By GEORGE ELPHINSTONE DALRYMPLE, Esq., Commissioner of Crown Lands in the Kennedy District of that Colony. Preceded by an extract from a Despatch to His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, H.M. Secretary of State for the Colonies, from His Excellency Sir George F. Bowen, Governor of Queensland, dated "Brisbane, 5th March, 1862."

Read, November 10, 1862.

"MY LORD DUKE,—I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of a letter from Mr. George Elphinstone Dalrymple, reporting his exploration of the course of the River Burdekin to its principal estuary, now identified with the River Wickham of the charts.

"I have the honour, &c.,
(Signed) G. F. BOWEN."

To the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Brisbane.

Bowen, Port Denison, February 12, 1862.

SIR,—I have the honour to state, for the information of his Excellency Sir George F. Bowen, that having lately had to visit the neighbourhood of Upstart Bay and the Lower Burdekin Valley on official duty, I availed myself of the opportunity to connect my explorations of that river in 1859 and 1860 * with my maritime exploration of its mouths.

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* *See* Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, vol. v. No. 1, pp. 4-8.

Passing Camp XLVI. of my expedition of 1859 and 1860 on Upstart Bay, near the south-eastern mouth of the Wickham River, I crossed fine open plains, richly grassed and watered by lagoons, bounded on the north-east by the mangrove-flats of Upstart Bay, and stretching away to the south for about 8 miles to Stokes's, Gregory's, and Spencer's Ranges, which are parallel to the coast.

On the 15th December I ascended Mount Inkermann about 3 miles from the principal mouth of the river, the course of which lay extended beneath me, sweeping round (from the immediate neighbourhood of my last point of exploration thereon in 1859 and 1860) into the large estuary of the river in Upstart Bay, surveyed by Captains Wickham (H.M.S. *Beagle*, 1839) and Blackwood (H.M.S. *Fly*, 1843), and by Mr. Smith, R.N., and myself in the Queensland Government schooner *Spitfire*, in 1860, when I had the honour of reporting to his Excellency that this estuary was the principal mouth of the Burdekin.

I followed the course of the river up for 30 miles—to the place, in fact, from which I was obliged to turn back on my first expedition—and have now the gratification of being able to report that I have at length completed my exploration of the lower course of this river from Dr. Leichhardt's starting-point in lat. 20° 37′ S., long. 147° E., to its mouth in Upstart Bay in lat. 19° 42′ S., long. 147° 30′ E., a distance of about 110 miles.

I found the course of the Burdekin to be undivided to within about 15 miles of its mouth, at which point, and also at about 3 miles lower down, large branches are thrown off on the northern bank of the river, which enter Upstart Bay on the eastern side of the Cape Bowling Green delta, at about 9 miles and 3 miles respectively north of the principal mouth.

At 9 miles from the mouth, navigation ceases even for boats, and its bed assumes the usual character of the whole of its lower course, viz. extensive reaches of water occupying the whole bed, which alternate with extensive sweeps of red sand (the *detritus* of granitic rocks) through which meanders a running stream of about 50 feet broad and 2 to 3 feet deep. The course of this river from the point at which it emerges from Leichhardt's Range (of my previous expedition) is about due north-north-west for 60 miles. South-eastward of Mount Elliot, a low range named by me "Mount Bend-Easterly" causes it to sweep round in a semicircle of about 25 miles, when it reaches the ocean.

The whole banks of the Lower Burdekin are richly grassed, open forest country, with occasional plains of greater or less extent, watered by the river and lagoons. Finer cattle-runs are not to be found in Queensland, and the richness of the herbage, grasses,

and soil, the purity of the water, and healthiness of the climate render the valley of the Lower Burdekin and its tributaries a most valuable addition to the pastoral and agricultural resources of the colony.

I have the honour, &c.,

(Signed) G. ELPHINSTONE DALRYMPLE.

II.—*Reports of the various Expeditions fitted out to relieve, or ascertain the fate of Messrs.* BURKE *and* WILLS, *comprising*—

1. Report and Journal of Commander W. H. NORMAN, R.N., with Map showing portion of Flinders River.
2. Diary of J. M'KINLAY, Esq. (with Map).
   (*a*). From Adelaide to Leichhardt River (Camp 58).
   (*b*). From Camp 58 to Port Denison.
3. Journal of Landsborough's Expedition from Carpentaria (with Map).
   (*a*). Report to Captain NORMAN on the Albert River.
   (*b*). From Albert River, south-westward, to Rich Plains, Herbert River, about 20° 15′ S., 158° 4′ E. (both approximative).
   (*c*). From Albert River across the Australian Continent, *viâ* the Darling River to Melbourne.
4. WALKER's Expedition from the Nogoa to the Gulf of Carpentaria (with Map).
5. Despatch from Sir H. BARKLY, of 21st August, 1862.
6. Despatches from Sir G. BOWEN, of 15th March and 12th April, 1862.

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1. *Report of* Commander NORMAN, R.N., *followed by Extracts from Journal.*

To the Hon. the Chief Secretary, &c.

H.M.C.S. *Victoria*, Hobson's Bay, April 1, 1862.

SIR,—I have the honour to forward the accompanying copy of my journal on the late expedition to the Gulf of Carpentaria, for the purpose of rendering relief, if possible, to the missing explorers under the command of Mr. Burke, and of directing the movements of the two land-parties organized and dispatched from Brisbane and Rockhampton; and beg to submit the following condensed remarks and observations of the voyage and expedition which I had the honour to command, for the information of the Government.